

## **White House Drops Controversial Vets Health Care Proposal Following Letter from 68 Members of Congress**

***Wilson: "The White House is now doing the right thing by our Veterans."***

Washington, DC - This week, Congressman Charlie Wilson (OH-6) joined many of his colleagues in opposing a controversial proposal that would have required veterans to use private insurance to pay for treatment of service-related injuries.

The bipartisan group wrote to the White House expressing their opposition to the proposal.

Shortly after the letter was sent, White House officials met with leaders of the national Veterans' Service Organizations. Later in the afternoon, it was announced that the administration had decided not to move forward with the proposal.

"I'm so pleased that the White House listened to us and is now doing the right thing by our Veterans," Wilson said. "Our veterans and military retirees have earned their benefits and our support."

The text of the letter that helped persuade the White House is attached below.

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March 17, 2009

The Honorable Barack Obama  
President of the United States  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President,

We first want to take this opportunity to thank you for the clear commitment your administration's budget outline makes to our nation's veterans. The proposed 10 percent increase in discretionary funding for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) for next fiscal year is truly historic. We believe the 2010 budget will ensure the VA never again faces the chronic under-funding that prevented countless veterans from receiving the health benefits they have earned.

While we strongly support your plans to increase funding for the VA by \$25 billion over the next five years, it is with equal conviction that we oppose the proposal to bill veterans' private

health insurance plans for care and treatment of service-connected injuries or disabilities.

We do not give our veterans health care - they earn it - and it would be unacceptable for the VA to ask our veterans to pay for the treatment of injuries received while serving our nation in uniform. That responsibility belongs to the VA, and it would be wrong to outsource the responsibility of covering the care of those veterans to private insurance companies.

Additionally, this proposal could harm our veterans and their families in unintended, yet very serious ways, jeopardizing their families' health care and even negatively affecting veterans' employment opportunities. Billing a veteran's private health insurance for the treatment of service-connected injuries could lead to increased health care premiums, and could potentially discourage employers from hiring veterans.

We know you are committed to expanding employment opportunities for veterans. Already this year, your administration and Congress have worked to create countless jobs for veterans returning from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, but this proposal would undermine our efforts.

We urge you to take this proposal off the table, and let us instead focus on ensuring that our veterans receive the full care and benefits they have earned. The moral obligation our nation has to our veterans demands nothing less. We are happy to discuss these issues with you further as we move toward a final budget for the VA.

We would like to thank you again for your commitment to improving care for the men and women who have borne the battle, and who have sacrificed their health and well-being in serving their country. Thank you for your service to our nation.

Sincerely,

Glenn Nye  
Anne Kirkpatrick  
John Hall  
Rob Wittman  
Gabrielle Giffords  
Diane Watson  
Tom Rooney  
Larry Kissel  
Steve Kagen  
Eric Massa  
Bill Foster  
Bart Stupak  
Harry Teague  
Dan Boren  
Michael Arcuri  
John Barrow

Ciro Rodriguez  
Jerry McNerney  
Tom Perriello  
Carol Shea-Porter  
Travis Childers  
Ben Lujan  
Sanford Bishop  
Dina Titus  
Joe Sestak  
Betsey Markey  
Madeleine Bordallo  
Suzanne Kosmas  
Marion Barry  
Alan Grayson  
Harry Mitchell  
Dennis Kucinich  
Michael Michaud  
John Dingell  
William Delahunt  
Ron Klein  
Ben Chandler  
Mazie Hirono  
Betty Sutton  
Robert Wexler  
Rick Larson  
Tim Bishop  
John Boccieri  
James Oberstar  
Mary Jo Kilroy  
Collin Peterson  
Leonard Boswell  
Lois Capps  
Stephanie Herseth Sandlin  
Daniel B. Maffei  
Mike Honda  
Debbie Halvorson  
Michael McMahon  
Mike McIntyre  
Phil Hare  
Charles Rangel  
Lincoln Davis  
Dennis Cardoza  
Charlie Wilson  
Bobby Bright  
Gary Peters  
Joe Courtney

Jim Himes  
Jason Altmire  
Peter Welch  
Martin Heinrich  
Parker Griffith  
Mike Ross